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**Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries**

## Letter dated 24 October 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Declaration adopted by the Extraordinary Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries held in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, on 24 and 25 June 2003 (see annex).

I would like to request that the present letter and its annex be issued as a document of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly under agenda item 102.

(*Signed*) Joël W. **Adechi**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
Chairman of the Least Developed Countries
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Annex

# Extraordinary Ministerial Conference Of the Least Developed Countries Rabat 24 – 25 June 2003

# RABAT DECLARATION

*We*, Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), having gathered in Rabat (Kingdom of Morocco) on 24 and 25 June 2003 in a Extraordinary Conference, at the invitation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco, as Chairman of the Group of 77 for the Year 2003,

*Having reviewed* the international economic situation and exchanged our views on this subject,

*Recalling* the outcomes of major United Nations Conferences and Summits and their follow-up processes,

*Recalling* the Millennium Declaration and in particular the Millennium Development Goals aimed at eradicating extreme poverty,

*Recalling* the Brussels Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the Decade 2001-2010 as a roadmap for the sustainable development of the Least Developed Countries.

*Recalling* the commitment made by the International Community at the Doha Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to address the marginalization of the Least Developed Countries in international trade and to assist them fully integrate into the multilateral trading system,

*Recalling also* the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development,

*Having Examined* the economic issues on the agenda of the 58th Session of the General Assembly, particularly those representing an interest for the Least Developed Countries.

*Having reviewed* the state of the preparations for the High Level Conference on South-South Cooperation to be held in Marrakech (Morocco) from 16 to 19 December 2003,

*Having also taken note* of the Dhaka Declaration adopted by the Second Meeting of the Ministers of Trade of the Least Developed Countries held in Dhaka (Bangladesh) from 31 May to 2 June 2003,

*Deeply concerned* over the weak human resources, technical and productive capacities of the Least Developed Countries, their growing marginalization in the field of information technologies, vulnerability to natural disasters, widespread disease, famines and conflicts that exacerbate their deteriorating socio-economic conditions,

*Deeply concerned also* over the continuously declining rate of economic growth of the Least Developed Countries in spite of the broad structural and economic reform measures undertaken by them, the shrinking aid levels and Foreign Direct Investments (FDI), the heavy debt burden, lack of market access, supply side constraints and decline in commodity prices which continue to hinder the growth of the Least Developed Countries.

1. *Welcome* the unprecedented initiative of the Chairman of the group of 77 to convene the joint Least Developed Countries Ministerial Meeting to foster strong solidarity and to pave the way for better strategies to address the concerns of the Least Developed Countries in all major economic and development issues,

2. *Welcome* the enhancement of coordination mechanism among the Least Developed Countries in particular the establishment of the Least Developed Countries Coordination Bureau chaired by Benin,

3. *Recognize* that the concerns of the Least Developed Countries which represent the weakest segment of the international community need to be specifically addressed in all economic and development issues,

4. *Reaffirm* the important role of the Group of 77 as negotiating power of developing countries,

5. *Reaffirm solemnly* that the Group of 77 will continue to put emphasis on and defend the concerns of the Least Developed Countries in all economic and development issues in close consultation and collaboration with the Least Developed Countries Coordination Bureau.

6. *Stress* the central role of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in the coordination of actions in the United Nations system in support of the implementation of the Least Developed Countries Programme of Action. In this regard recommend that the United Nations support the participation of the Least Developed Countries Focal Point to the annual substantive sessions of the Economic and Social Council in which the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action is regularly assessed,

7. *Welcome* the establishment of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and call upon the United Nations Secretary General to specifically take into account the concerns of the Least Developed Countries the majority of

which are African Least Developed Countries, in the management and the staffing of the office which should be adequately expanded,

8. *Stress* the need for effective implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and call on development partners, including, multilateral financial organizations to honour their commitments therein,

9. *Invite* the countries that have not yet done so, to offer a duty free and quota-free market access for the Least Developed Countries exportations,

10. *Invite* creditors of the Clubs of Paris and London, in view of the unsustainable level of indebtedness of the Least Developed Countries, to consider the total cancellation of their debt,

11. *Urge* the developed countries that have not done so to make concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product as official development assistance to developing countries and effectively implement their commitment on such assistance to the Least Developed Countries as contained in paragraph 83 of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, which was adopted in Brussels on 20 May 2001,

12. *Invite* the international organizations to support, as a priority, the Programmes of financial and technical cooperation devoted to the Least Developed Countries,

13. *Invite also* developed countries to increase their contribution to the Global Fund devoted to the struggle against major diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, which continue to affect, considerably, the efforts of developing countries, notably the Least Developed countries,

14. *Invite also* developed countries to increase their contributions in the fight against natural disasters and support countries in post-conflict situation,

15. *Welcome* the resolution A/Res/57/270B of 23 June 2003 of the United Nations General Assembly on the Integrated and Coordinated implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations Conferences and Summits and their follow-up processes and urge that the Least Developed countries concerns should be taken into account in the integrated follow-up and implementation of the mechanisms of the main outcomes of all the UN Conferences and Summits.

16. *Call* on the forthcoming WTO Ministerial Conference to be held in Cancun, Mexico in September 2003, to adopt further measures to efficiently address the marginalization of the Least Developed Countries in international trade and to assist them fully integrate into the multilateral trading system and by ensuring expedited entry into the organization for those Least Developed Countries that are not yet members.

17. *Welcome* the initiatives of the United Nations and the Group of 8 (G8) to bridge the digital divide that has further marginalized the Least Developed Countries particularly in the area of information technology and call on the International Community to address the special needs of the Least Developed Countries therein. In this regard, the forthcoming World Summit on Information Society should adopt a concrete plan of action for bridging the digital divide in the Least Developed Countries.

18. *Welcome* the continued initiatives of the Kingdom of Morocco in favour of the Least Developed Countries in particular its announcement of the cancellation of African Least Developed Countries debt and granting duty-free access to their exports,

19. *Invite* the countries members of the Group of 77 to take, within South-South Cooperation, solidarity measures in favour of the Least Developed Countries in the fields of trade including market access, finance including debt relief as well as aid including technical assistance,

20. *Invite* the international community to materialize its support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) which also includes 34 African Least Developed Countries, by providing the necessary financial resources for its implementation in terms of Official Development Assistance, Foreign Direct Investments, debt relief, market access and support to reforms,

21. *Call upon* the international community to ensure that the countries graduating from the Least Developed Countries status are facilitated to have a smooth transition so that their developmental programmes and projects may be sustained at a level not worse off than before graduation,

22. *Express* sincere appreciation and gratitude to the people and the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco for their warm hospitality and the excellent arrangements for the success of the first joint Least Developed Countries Ministerial meeting with the Chairman of the Group of 77.

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